

Comments on Orient lists view regarding the Collection of the Holy Qur'an

By: **Hafiz Muhammad Afzal ***

Abstract

The analyses of the history of collection of the Holy Qur'an, as has been done by both Muslims and Orient lists, lead them to two different perspectives. The investigations done by Muslim Scholars reached to a conclusion, which verifies their belief regarding the eternal protection of Holy Qur'an. According to the Islamic faith, Muslims believe in the saying that Allah has promised the protection of the Holy Qur'an from worldly calamities by storing it in the hearts.

The Orient lists could not reach to the correct conclusion from their analyses. A review to their work reveals that these incorrect conclusions were due to the aims that they kept in their minds to create confusion regarding the history of the collection of the Holy Qur'an. This analysis was done initially on the variant readings of the Holy Qur'an and later on the collection of the Holy Qur'an.

In this paper, we analyse the methodology by which the orient lists analyse the collection of the Holy Qur'an along with the variant readings of the Holy Qur'an and discuss in brief their misunderstandings.

1. Introduction

The analyses of the history of collection of the Holy Qur'an, as has been done by both Muslims and Orientalists, lead them to two different perspectives. The investigations done by Muslim Scholars reached to a conclusion which verifies their belief regarding the eternal protection of Holy Qur'an. According to the Islamic faith, Muslims believe in the saying that Allah has promised the protection of the Holy Qur'an from worldly calamities by storing it in the hearts.

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

"We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption)."

-
- Islamic and Arabic Studies Department, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

وانزلت عليك كتابا لا يغسله الماء محفوظ في الصدور لا يتطرق إليه الذهاب بل يبقى
على ممر الزمان

"And I sent the Book to you which cannot be washed away by water."

The Orient lists could not reach to the correct conclusion from their analyses. A review to their work reveals that these incorrect conclusions were due to the aims that they kept in their minds to create confusion regarding the history of the collection of the Holy Qur'an. This analysis was done initially on the variant readings of the Holy Qur'an and later on the collection of the Holy Qur'an. In this paper, we analyse the methodology by which the orientlists analyse the collection of the Holy Qur'an along with the variant readings of the Holy Qur'an and discuss in brief their misunderstandings.

This paper is organized as follows. Background information regarding nature of the orient lists is provided in Section 2. Section 3 covers in depth the various literature works done by orient lists along with clarifications with regard to their misunderstandings. Section 4 concludes the paper.

2. Background Information

Orient lists are classified into two groups. Although the ultimate aim of any orient list is to malign the image of Islam, one group does it openly and the others do it in a deceptive manner without expressing their intention. Those who are explicit in their expression of contempt for Islam are easily identified and can be promptly discarded. But, those who conceal their prejudicial objectives behind illusive reasoning ought to be confronted. The latter group actually claims that it works on analytical basis but always concentrates on narrations (hadith) that are weak and seem to support their claims and at the same time it ignores the strong narrations. See the comments on isnads made by Jeffery in his research [1].

The misconceptions of Orient lists:

1. Orient lists think of the Holy Qur'an as a similar scripture to the Bible or Torah. They tend to believe that the Holy Qur'an has been edited as were the Bible and Torah. This misconception introduces various erroneous notions in their minds. An attempt to justify these notions leads to fallacy. It is a known fact that there are several disparate, and often conflicting, versions/editions of Bible or Torah, which has been admitted by the orientlists as well, that the authors of existing versions of Bible are totally unknown and that many chapters remained undiscovered for centuries. It is also observed that there exist very obvious differences between the Catholics and Protestants' Bibles [2], but such a predicament does not exist with regards to the Holy Qur'an.

2. Another misconception by the orient lists is the understanding that at the time of the death of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), the Holy Qur'an did not exist in the same form as it exists now. The Holy Qur'an has been perfected/corrected during the first two centuries after the Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) death. This is similar to how Bible came into existence [3].
3. The variant readings of the Qur'an (Qiraat القراءات) are treated by the orientlists as having different versions of the Qur'an (i.e., versions which have different contents from each other). Moreover, attempts are made based on Qiraat Shaadhda (القراءات الشاذة) to prove that the existing Qur'an is missing some words or is different from the actual Qur'an.

A brief Response to the general view

1. When these orient lists (whether past or present) started analysing the Bible and Torah, they needed certain proofs, narrations, or any signs which would help them in deciding that which versions of these books are right and which are incorrect. They had to go through this process because different versions of their books (Bible or Torah) are not identical, and baseless (e.g. who wrote these version, when were they written etc.). On the other hand, however, different volumes of Qur'an, to which these orientlists point, have a strong foundation, which is based on the fact that the Qur'an was collected directly from sources which were compiled under the instructions of Prophet himself and were very carefully protected. Moreover, the collectors who were appointed by Prophet (PBUH) to write the Qur'an were not simply just writers, but were themselves skilled and significant memorizers of the Qur'an. Keeping in the view the above facts, it was unnecessary, rather illogical, to follow the procedure adopted by orient lists to decide about text (النص القرآني) as far as the Qur'an is concerned.
2. Again, the orient lists are wrong in their approach towards the existence of Qur'an. They have compared the process of collection of Qur'an with the Bible, and suggest that the two books came into existence in a similar way. This is due to their ignorance regarding the actual procedure of the existence/collection of the Qur'an. As will be discussed in later sections, the existing Qur'an is the one which was collected in the reign of Abu-Bakr, though in later years, the changes were only made for the sake of reading and memorizing, and not in the actual content. For example, the changes that were made by Caliph Uthman was just that he divided the Qiraat القراءات (the seven Huroof السبعة) which were all in one volume of the Mushaf (مصحف) of Abu-Bakr into different Mushafs, so that people living in one geographical area should read the Qur'an in a uniform way. Moreover, changes which came after Uthman, for example distributing the Qur'an into thirty parts and

ISLAM, HUMAN RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY

dividing every part into four (or eight) sub-parts was again for the convenience of reading. Similar is the case of Tashkeel (putting harakaat on letters to clarify the correct pronunciation). Thus, these were the only changes that were carried out in the first century only, with the idea of only making the reading convenient, and not at all the contents were corrected. However, the case of Bible or Torah is entirely different from Qur'an. The current Bible and Torah came into existence with many major changes and after many hundreds of years since they were first revealed by Allah.

3. With regard to the various reading methods of the Holy Qur'an, orient lists do not appear to have understood the basics behind them. It should be noted that the different variants of reading of Qur'an only involve different pronunciations of a word, without changing the meaning of that word. This might be due to the fact that either they do not have sufficient information or rather that's not their aim. Justifications regarding misunderstanding of variant readings of the Holy Qur'an are provided in Section 3.1.
4. In the case of Qiraat Shaddha, (which reached us without strong sanad) there is difference both in reading and sometimes also in meaning. It is important to mention that Qiraat Shaddha cannot, in any case, be treated as part the Qur'an. Therefore, it is absolutely forbidden in prayer but it can be considered when Tafsir (explanation or commentary) for the Holy Qur'an is being written. There is fourteen such Qiraat Shaddha. It is, therefore, illogical to assume that these Qiraat Shaaddha could provide the basis for considering existing Qur'an as having missing some words or being different from the actual Qur'an.

Keeping the general nature of orientlists in view as mentioned above, we will see how they are wrongly guided in their analysis.

4. Literature Survey along with clarifications

Before we proceed to respond to the misconceptions of the orientlists, some relevant background information is provided below. This information will help us in understanding the misguidance created by the orientlists with respect to the process of collection of the Qur'an

3.1. Variant readings of the Holy Qur'an:

There are two methodologies involved in the variant readings of the Holy Qur'an. They are: Qiraat mutavatira (القراءات المتواترة) and Qiraat Shaaddha (القراءات الشاذة). In the case of Qiraat mutavatira (ten different ways of reading the Holy Qur'an), there is no conflict of meaning among the different ways of reading but there is a possibility of having differences in pronunciation of words or the words themselves. Orientalists generally do not concentrate on this because they would not find any difference in the meanings of Qiraat mutavatira. This

difference in readings was due to the usage of different pronunciations or different words for a single word by different sects. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) asked Allah and HE has given the sentences of the Holy Qur'an in many such reading methods.

"أن ابن عباس رضي الله عنهما حدثه: أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: أقراني جبريل على حرف، فراجعته، فلم أزل أستزيده ويزيدني، حتى انتهى إلى سبعة أحرف"

Translation

Narrated 'Abdullah bin 'Abbas: Allah's Apostle said, "Gabriel recited the Qur'an to me in one way. Then I requested him (to read it in another way), and continued asking him to recite it in other ways, and he recited it in several ways till he ultimately recited it in seven different ways."

3.2. Completeness of the Holy Qur'an:

The Holy Qur'an which is used currently, is the same one being used from the period of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). At the very moment, the Holy Qur'an read by every Muslim in the world is the same. In case of a situation when someone brings a narration or statement stating that there is supposed to be a different sentence [ayat] in the Holy Qur'an, then we need to analyse this sentence based on the rules of Riwayah and Dirayah. Orientalists don't apply all these rules but just bring these sentences to the limelight and confuse the people. The method for analysing the completeness of the Holy Qur'an is different from that of Bible (also Torah), because different versions of Bible existed at the same time and there existed a need to find the complete Bible from the mixed one, but in the case of the Holy Qur'an the complete one exists and so anything extra is brought should be analysed separately.

3.3. Collection during Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him) period

Query 1:

A. The Muslim argument on the collection of the Qur'an texts is the reverse of the European. Since we 'know', but only by accepting at face value Muslim assertions to this effect, that the Qur'an was not first collected until after the Prophet's death, we have on that account supposed that the likelihood is that it will be incomplete. The Muslims, 'knowing' that is incomplete, have on that account argued that it could not have been collected until after the Prophet's death. [2].

B. Before Zayd ibn-Thabit there was nothing done towards the collecting of the Qur'an.[3]

Clarification (1: a)

The point that has been missed by the orientalist here is due to the fact that they treat Qur'an as Bible or Torah in terms of revelation. However, there is a significant difference in the process of revelation of Qur'an and other books revealed by Allah. Bible (and Torah) were revealed in one time as a complete volume, whereas the Qur'an was revealed in stages in the span of 23 years. Until Prophet Muhammad's transformation to the other world (which the author has termed as death), divine revelation [Wahi الوحي] kept arriving. Therefore the collection of the Qur'an in one volume was impossible.

To continue further, the interpretation of the above query by the orientalist is from the narration from Zaid ibn Thabit, "قبض النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم ولم يكن القرآن جمع في شيء" [1]. The clear understanding of this narration is that the Holy Qur'an was not collected in one book [mushaf] during the period of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). Collection of the Holy Qur'an can be divided into two ways: writing down of the Holy Qur'an & collection of the Holy Qur'an as one book. Writing down of the Holy Qur'an [in full] was done during the period of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) but collecting them into one book was not done at that time. Collecting into one book was not done during Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) period because the divine revelation (Wahe) did not arrive according to the order of the chapters (surah) in the Holy Qur'an and there were occasions to indicate the removal of previously indicated verse (ayat) with the new one. Being not collected into one book is not a problem because the Holy Qur'an was in written form both with the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and also with many companions (Sahabah). Also, there existed many companions who had memorised the Holy Qur'an.

B) Referring to the discussion in a) above, it was logically not possible to collect all Qur'an into one volume. As the Prophet had passed away, the revelations then had stopped, and it is logical that there was no new revelation to come, and thus the revelation of Qur'an was complete. After the passing away of the Prophet (PBUH), Abu-bakr was chosen the Caliph the same day. With his caliphate came along some immediate issues to be handled, such as the battles with Murtadeen (people who had denounced Islam). Once he took care of these issues, he then converged his attention towards collecting the Qur'an into one volume. For this, he appointed Zayd bin-Thabit for collection of Qur'an.

Query 2:

The history of the collection of the Qur'an texts was discussed by the Muslim under the aegis of three views:

1. The virtually unanimous opinion that our present Qur'an texts (the mushaf) are incomplete;
2. The virtually unanimous acceptance of the proposition that the first stage in the history of the Qur'an texts was marked by the circulation of a number of not quite identical recensions privately assembled and independently organised by a number of Muhammad's contemporaries;
3. The unanimous assertion that there obtains conflict between the sources of the Fiqh: Qur'an and Sunna. [1]

Clarification 2:

The first and the third statements need proof. These kinds of statements cannot be considered valid without proper justifications. With regard to the second statement, the claim is not correct, the collection of Qur'an was done on scientific basis (see clarification of Query 10.b), and all variants of Qur'an were in fact identical in contents.

Query 3:

- A. We have well-known stories of how Ali, Salim, Abu Musa and others had collections, and there are narrations which give lists of those who had commented making collections or memorizing during the lifetime of the Prophet. As no two of these lists agree with one another to any great extent one is driven to conclude that while it was known that such collections were made there was no accurate information, save with regard to a few names, as to who made them. [2]
- B. What we find in early Islam, as a matter of fact, is only what we might have expected to find. Different members of the community who were interested began to collect in written form so much as they could gather of the revelation material that had been proclaimed by the Prophet. Later, with the gradual expansion of the Muslim empire, some of these collections began to acquire notoriety as they came to be in some sort authoritative in different centres. Naturally it would be those collections that could claim some completeness that would attain to this position of eminence. [2]

Clarification 3:

There are about 23 companions who used to write the revelation from the prophet (PBUH) [3]. So the names of those companions vary, depending upon the availability of any companion at the time of revelation of any Ayah. So the name of any companion referred to as writer of the collection of Qur'an from any

ISLAM, HUMAN RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY

narrator is dependent upon the knowledge of that particular narrator. And these names are amongst those 23 companions.

Writing of the Holy Qur'an during Prophet (Peace be upon him) was carried in two parallel phases. One is for the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) himself, which is the official copy.

"وإذا نزلت عليه الآية فيقول ضعوا هذه الآية في السورة التي يذكر فيها كذا وكذا" [4]

"كنا عند رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم نؤلف القرآن من الرقاع" [5]

Second is from many companions who wrote for themselves. These writings by the companions also possessed some personal notes. For example, if the meaning of some word was not clear, then these companions used to ask the meaning from the Prophet (PBUH) and then wrote the meaning of this word next to the actual word so as to remember. Therefore, these personal collections of companions were different from each other, because one companion would ask for one word for his clarification and record it in his collection, while the other would ask for another word and record that in his collection. Personal writings were never considered official and so they should not be considered equivalent to the officially written Holy Qur'an, and neither the writers of these personal writings insisted that their collection be taken as the official version. There are few words which are famous in narrations as "Qiraat of Caliph Uthman", for example

قوله تعالى "و لتكن منكم أمة يدعون إلى الخير و يأمرون بالمعروف و ينهون عن المنكر

ويستعينون الله على ما أصابهم و أولئك هم المفلحون [1]

These under lined words are not present in his collection.

In order to elaborate further, below are shown few examples which are from the collections of several companions like Ibn-e-Abbas, Aisha & Hafsa and Saad Bin Abi Waqqas, where they had added few words (marked as under lined) to the ayah in order to clarify the context and make it in an understandable form for themselves. Later these collections became famous as Qirat of those companions.

1- و لا جناح عليكم أن تبتغوا فضلا من ربكم في مواسم الحج (قراءة ابن عباس رضى الله عنه) [2]

2- حافظوا على الصلوات و الصلاة الوسطى صلاة العصر (قراءة عائشة و حفصة رضى الله عنهما) [2]

3- و له أخ أو أخت من أمّ (قراءة سعد بن أبي وقاص رضى الله عنه) [2]

This means there are few explanatory words in personal collection of some companions but Orient lists consider them as different versions of Qur'an either by mistake or purposefully to create confusion in this regard.

The argument in part (b) is basically misunderstanding of the author. In actual he is indicating different readings noted by different companions. It is to be noted that as indicated earlier in Section 3.1, Holy Qur'an came down to the earth in seven forms [Qiraath Mutavatira] as divine revelation. All these seven reading methods are agreed upon and have no difference in their meanings. The author in actual himself seems to be misapprehended and is purposefully creating confusion by terming the different reading styles by peoples from different parts of the world as notoriety acquired by the collections of Holy Qur'an. The reader is recommended to review clarification 12 for further explanation.

Query 4:

Nothing is more certain than that when the Prophet died there was no collected, arranged, collated body of revelations. Recent research by Dr. Bell of Edinburgh and Prof. Torrey of Yale has suggested that there is internal evidence in the Qur'an itself that the Prophet kept in his own care a considerable mass of revelation material belonging to various periods of his activity, some of it in revised and some of it in unrevised form, and that this material was to form the basis of the Kitab he wished to give his community before he died. Death, however, overtook him before anything was done about the matter. [1]

Clarification 4:

There is no doubt that Qur'an was not collected in one volume at the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), but the organized and revised contents of the Qur'an were well-known to the companions and was also memorized by the companions in the proper order. During the month of Ramadhan, angel Gabriel used to visit Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and both of them used to read the Holy Qur'an [in complete] once, to each other. In this process, only those verses were recited by Gabriel which had to be kept, and the ones which had to be removed (mansookh) were not recited by him. During the last year of the life period of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), angel Gabriel came to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and each read the Holy Qur'an twice. This type of reading made sure that the verses that ought to be removed were removed and the Holy Qur'an was preserved in fullest form

"ان جبريل كان يعارضه بالقرآن كل عام مرة وانه عارضه به في العام مرتين" [2]

The outcome of the research by Dr. Bell & Prof. Torrey indicates that Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) did not complete the revision process of the Holy Qur'an. We feel that this conclusion is due to a wrong perception

ISLAM, HUMAN RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY

possibly caused by the presence of some verses in the Holy Qur'an which are over-ruled by certain other verses in the Holy Qur'an itself, although the over-ruled verses are also present in the Qur'an and were not removed intentionally. The presence of various verses [which appear to be contradictory] about a single topic was to emphasize a certain important point, for instance, the changes in society should be brought about in stages, rather than in a single step. An example is regarding the presence of verses about drinking liquor. Initially, Allah told that fruits can be used as food which is good and as liquor which is bad. Secondly, Allah indicated that liquor has little useful effect in it but has large amount of harmful effect in it. Thirdly, Allah ordered not to drink liquor when you are going for prayer. Finally, liquor is totally banned in Islam. This indicates the restriction of liquor consumption in stages.

Query 5:

- A. The earliest start of narration available to us make it quite certain that there was no Qur'an left already as a heritage for the community. The prophet had proclaimed his message orally, and, except in the latter period of his ministry, whether they were recorded or not were often a matter of chance. [1]
- B. After Muhammad went to Medina his employment of secretaries is well attested. Among those used for the writing down of the revelations were Uthman, Muawiyya, Ubayy ibn-Kab, Zayd ibn-Thabit and Abdul-Allah ibn-Abi-Sarh. A curious story is told about the last-named. While Muhammad was dictating to him the passage beginning 23.12, he was carried away by wonder at this description of the creation of man; and, when Muhammad paused after the words 'another creature', exclaimed 'blessed be God, the best of creators'. Muhammad accepted this as the continuation of the revelation, and told him to write it down. This around doubt, however, in Ibn-Abi-Sarh, and later he gave up Islam and returned to Mecca; at the conquest of Mecca he was one of those proscribed, but was pardoned on the intercession of Uthman. This is the sort of story that could hardly have been invented. [2]

Clarification 5:

- A) The claim made by Jeffery [1] is not his own. This claim was first made by F. Buhl [3]. Orientalists followed by Buhl quoted him and made the same claims, without their own due efforts in finding the truth. The fact is that writing down of the verses of the divine inspiration was done by earlier stages. This could be justified by the fact that second caliph Umar did witness some verses of Holy Qur'an [Surah Taha] in written form before he embraced Islam [4]. This incident happened 6 years after Prophethood

[nubuwat] was bestowed on Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) or 7 years before the Hijrah.

- B) The incident quoted here has the following background. When the revelation was coming to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), he was dictating it to his companions so that they could write it. Ibn-Abi-Sarh being one of those writers was therefore recording the revelation and was fully aware of the context of the revelation. Both Prophet Muhammad and his companions were native speakers, and those companions were specially skilled in Arabic language. When the Prophet was dictating the revelation, he had stopped to take a breath. Ibn-Abi-Sarh immediately completed the sentence with his words, based on the context of the revelation and his knowledge of Arabic. It was a coincidence that the same words were also revealed by ALLAH. Since both the incidents (speaking of Ibn-Abi-Sarh and coming of revelation) happened almost in parallel, the Prophet (PBUH) then instructed Ibn-Abi-Sarh to write down the words, not because Ibn-Abi-Sarh had spoken those, but because the words had come through revelation.

It is a known fact that the Prophet (PBUH) himself could not include his own words into revelation; it would certainly be impossible to include someone else's words into the revelation. Therefore, the incident quoted by the orientalist has been presented in a wrong perception, and could not in any way prove that there were words in Qur'an spoken by someone else, except ALLAH.

Query 6:

- A. It seems probable that for a time, perhaps for years, it was only in their memories that Muhammad and the Muslims retained the passages revealed to him. This was the normal practice in a predominantly oral culture; the pre-Islamic Arabs poems were treated in the same way. [1]
- B. It is also probable, however, that much of the Qur'an was written down in some form during Muhammad's lifetime. [1]
- C. It remains to consider the state of the Qur'an at the time of Muhammad's death. Originally the revealed passages were preserved in the memories of Muhammad and his Companions, and after his death 'the hearts of men' continued to be a place where the Qur'an or parts of it were found; since the Qur'an had not been 'collected', no one could have memorized the Qur'an as a single whole, though a few might have memorized most of the parts. It is also known that parts of the Qur'an had been written down. In the story of the conversion of Omar ibn al-Khattab, this is said to have come about when he found his sister and her husband, who were Muslims, having sura Taha read to them by a friend from a sahifa (presumably a

ISLAM, HUMAN RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY

sheet of parchment or papyrus); Omar asked to see it, and is said to have been able to read it for himself. If this story is to be trusted (which is not at all certain), it shows that some revelations had been written down by the middle of the Meccan Period. [2]

Clarification 6:

The claims made by the orientalists in this query are proofless, and are based on personal thoughts of the orientalist without any historical justification. The Holy Qur'an written by prescribed scribes during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was complete. At the same time, some companions also wrote the Holy Qur'an for their own purposes. Thus the claim of the orientalist that the state of the Qur'an was not known at the time of death of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is irrational. It is, however, possible that the personal copies of some companions were not complete, which has no effect on the authenticity of the Qur'an written by companions appointed by the Prophet (PBUH).

The claim that "the Qur'an had not been 'collected', no one could have memorized the Qur'an as a single whole" is also not correct. There are many reasons to believe that all revelations were available in written form at the time of Prophet's death. There are certain indications that during the period of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) there were many companions who have memorized the Holy Qur'an in full. This is proven by many reasons:

1. During Caliph Abu Bakr period, 70 or 700 companions who had memorized the Holy Qur'an were killed,
"وَقُتِلَ فِي غُضُونِ ذَلِكَ مِنْ الصَّحَابَةِ جَمَاعَةٌ كَثِيرَةٌ قِيلَ سَبْعُمَانَةٌ وَقِيلَ أَكْثَرُ" [1]
2. During the period of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), there did not exist any awards or degrees like Hafidh Al Qur'an to indicate that, so and so has memorized the Holy Qur'an in full. Thus, there is no salutation used to find out whether they were hafidh Al Qur'an or not.
3. There are certain narrations that indicate the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) used to hear some companions reciting Holy Qur'an in nafal [optional] prayers in the night.
4. Companions are known for their obedience to the interest of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). Arabs during that time were also known for their memorization power. This is made valid with the historical note that a small boy who used to listen to companions of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) memorized many chapters of the Holy Qur'an even before he entered to Islam.

5. One of the distinguishing features of Qur'an is that it has some qualities which make it very easy to memorize by humans. In addition, there are many hadiths which show that the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) have strong desire to memorize Qur'an.

3.4. Collection during Caliph Abu Bakr (RA) period

Query 7:

- a. If Muhammad has already done complete recession of the Qur'an, there would have been no need later for a 'collection' of the Qur'an. In the story of the 'collection' under Abu-Bakr the later is said to have hesitated when the suggestion was first made on the ground that this was something Muhammad had never done; but this is a story on which in general little reliance can be placed. On the other hand, if different companions had memorized different selections of passages, and had perhaps put short pieces together differently, one would have expected greater divergences in the various texts than in fact we find. There is therefore a presumption that Muhammad himself had brought together many revealed passages and given them a definite order, and that this order was known and adhered to by his companions. [2]
- B. It is said that upward of 700 companions fell in the Yemama. Sufyan reports that when Salim was slain Umar hastened to Abu Bakr. But, as Salim had already 'collected the Qur'an into a single volume' – he was the first to collect the Qur'an and gave it the name mushaf, a word he heard in Ethiopia – his death would have had no damaging effect for the texts. [1]
- C. Umar ibn al-Khattab (who later was caliph from 634 to 644) noticed that many 'recites' of the Qur'an had been killed in the battle of Yemama (about 633), and became anxious lest some of the Qur'an should be lost for ever. He therefore approached the caliph Abu-Bakr and suggested that he should arrange for the 'collection' of the Qur'an. [2,3]
- D. Abu-Bakr upon the suggestion by Umar ibn al-Khattab commissioned Zayd ibn-Thabit to do the collection of the Qur'an. Zayd proceeded to gather portions of the Qur'an from 'pieces of papyrus, flat stones, palm-branches, shoulder-blades and ribs of animals, bits of leather, wooden tablets and the hearts of men.' [3] The author states that 'This report is probably not authentic' in [3].

Clarification 7:

This Query has already been clarified under **Clarification 1**. This indicates that collection of the Holy Qur'an into one single book was done during caliph Abu Bakr period.

ISLAM, HUMAN RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY

As said in **Query 7.c**, the suggestion of Umar ibn al-Khattab to Abu-Bakr about 'collection of the Holy Qur'an' does not indicate that the Holy Qur'an was not in written form. The whole Qur'an was in written form as clarified under **Clarification 1**. But it was written in many materials. Since some Surahs (particularly when the sura is long) were revealed to Prophet Muhammed at different instances over a period of time, they were written on different materials such as pieces of papyrus, flat stones, leather, etc. or whatever was available at that particular instance. Therefore, the ayas of the same surah were some times distributed over different materials as mentioned above. Since these ayas were written on different materials and at different time instances, the Prophet used to inform the writers and companions about the correct order of these ayas in the surah, so that these companions and writers would remember this correct order. Moreover, the Prophet was also used to recite the surahs with all ayas in the correct order, so that the companions and writers would be aware of the same correct order of the ayas in surah. Thus, the order of these ayas is known only to Huffaz (people who used to write and memorize the Qur'an with all surahs and ayas in a surah in the correct order). Umar ibn al-Khattab feared that the order will go away after the Huffaz and there will be a chance for people in following generations to misinterpret that all ayas written in different stones belong to one surah and so on, though it was not the case. So, to preserve the order and to write the Holy Qur'an in one place with correct order, he suggested Abu-Bakr to 'collect the Holy Qur'an'.

As indicated by the last sentence of the **Query 7**, it should be also been noted that there is doubt in their own views.

Query 8:

- a. There are many references to material that was lost at Yamama that should have formed part of the Qur'an. [1]
- b. A query appears on those killed in Yamama. In the lists of those who fell in that campaign, very few are mentioned who were likely to have had much of the Qur'an by heart. Those killed were mostly recent converts. Besides, according to the narration itself, much of the Qur'an was already written in some form or other, so that the death of some of those who could recite it from memory need not have given rise to the fear that parts of the Qur'an would be lost. [1]

Clarification 8:

The claim in Query 8.a is baseless; there is no authentic proof in Islamic history which mentions that parts of Qur'an were lost in the battle of Yamamah, because the holy Qur'an was already written down during Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) period itself, before the battle of Yamama.

Nevertheless, there was a fear by Umar-Ibn-Khattab about the loss of Huffaz in wars, but even this fear had arisen post-Yamamah battle. Thus, the claim might be just a sentential representation that many huffaz were killed in Yemama war, who knew the order of the verses in Holy Qur'an.

The Query 8.b is baseless because, a lot of early reverted companions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) took part in the war. We found in the history, 330 Muhajirins and Ansaars from Madhina, and 300 Muhajirins from outside Madhina, participated in Yamama war. Among those companions, many of them were famous in qur'anic studies. For example, Sabit-ibn-Quais who was one of the recorders (Katib-e-Wahi) of the Qur'an, Salim (who is known by أقرأ and was one of those four persons, to whom the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) ordered his companions to learn the Qur'an from), Abu Hudhaifa (guardian of Salim) who was the 40th person who reverted to Islam, Zaid (brother of Caliph Umar), Abbad ibnu Bishr (one of the best learners of Qur'an according to Aysha RA), Thufail Dousi (who learned the Qur'an from Ubayy Ibn-Kab), Yazeed (brother of Zayd ibn-Thabit) and other very well known companions.

Query 9:

- a. When Zayd ibn Thabit had written everything out on leaves of the same size, he gave these to Abu-Bakr, on whose death they went to 'Umar, who entrusted them to his daughter Hafsa. Modern European scholars feel that this collection is not official as it was passed to Hafsa. [2]
- b. Official recension of the Qur'an by Abu Bakr is highly doubtful. [3]

Clarification 9:

Being the official copy, the collection made by Abu-Bakr was passed to Umar when the latter was appointed as the caliph. It should be noted that caliph Umar did not appoint any one to follow him as caliph. This is the reason why the official copy of the Holy Qur'an was passed to Hafsa, who is the mother of muslims [ummul mu'mineen]. After Uthman was made caliph, Uthman asked Hafsa to give the Holy Qur'an and she responded to it,

فأرسل عثمان إلى حفصة: أن أرسلي إلينا بالصحف ننسخها في المصاحف ثم نردها إليك،

فأرسلت بها حفصة إلى عثمان [1]

It is worth to be noted that the orientalist are themselves doubtful and could not find any authentic evidences that could have supported the false ambiguity about the collection of Holy Qur'an, thus, have stated conflicting statements. For instance, W. M. Watt himself confesses in his own words:

ISLAM, HUMAN RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY

“A mass of written documents of some kind, however, was in Hafsa’s possession. If we reject the assumption that they were an official collection made by Zayd, we must find some other explanation of what they were. It is clear that they were regarded as authoritative, and were used in producing Uthman’s Qur’an.” [1]

Query 10.b is wrong and baseless because the official collection of the Holy Qur’an by Abu-Bakr is based on strong and scientific basis. Firstly, Abu-Bakr chose Zayd-bin-Thabit, the best recorder of Qur’an (katib-e-wahi) and was among those who were present in the “العرضة الأخيرة” (i.e. the last Ramadhan of Prophet Mohammad’s life in which angel Jibrael recited the Quran twice to Prophet Mohammad PBUH and he recited the Quran back to angel Jibrael.)

[2] “قال أبو بكر: إنك رجل شاب عاقل لا نتهمك، وقد كنت تكتب الوحي لرسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم،”

Secondly, Abu-bakr appointed Umar-bin-Khattab to support and assist Zayd-bin-Thabit in the collection of Qur’an.

[3] “ان أبا بكر قال لعمر و زيد : اقعدا على باب المسجد فمن جاءكما بشاهدين على شيء من كتاب الله فاكتباه”

Thirdly, Abu-bakr made a public announcement that whoever has parts of Qur’an written by him for himself should bring it to Zayd-bin-Thabit and Umar-bin-Khattab, along with two witnesses who confirm that they saw the person recording the Qur’an when the revelation (Wahi) was brought to Prophet (peace be upon him).

Hence, Abu-bakr instructed Zayd-bin-Thabit and Umar-bin-Khattab to collect Qur’an from all sources, which were:

- 1) manuscripts written on different materials by recorders of the Qur’an (Katibeen-e-Wahi) who were assigned by the Prophet himself.
- 2) from hearts of Huffaz, who had memorized the Qur’an and
- 3) People who had recorded parts of Qur’an based on their personal interest (and were not officially assigned recorders) and who had proven that those parts were authentic.

All these steps strongly indicate that the collection of Qur’an by Abu-bakr was done on scientific basis, and to call these efforts ‘doubtful’ is illogical.

Query 10:

- A. It seems practically certain, then, that no complete 'collection' of the Qur'an was officially made during the caliphate of Abu-Bakr. The traditional account so far considered was doubtless **gradually** elaborated to avoid the awkward fact that the 'first' collection' of the Qur'an was made by Uthman, who was greatly disliked. [1]
- B. There is no unanimity about the originator of the idea of collecting the Qur'an; generally it is said to have been Umar, but sometimes Abu-Bakr is said to have commissioned the 'collection' on his own initiative. On the other hand, there is a narration which says 'Umar was first to 'collect' the Qur'an and completely excludes Abu-Bakr. [2]

Clarification 10:

In query 11.a the author contradicts himself in his **Query 9** and makes his own assumptions to justify his personal views.

Query 10.b. It is very clear that, 'Umar was the one who requested Abu-Bakr to collect the Qur'an in one volume and Abu-Bakr being the caliph acted upon 'Umar's proposal and commissioned the collection of Qur'an and he appointed 'Umar along with Zayd for this responsibility. Keeping all these details in mind, stating this is right that Abu-Bakr collected the Qur'an, whereas, this is also not wrong to state that 'Umar collected the Qur'an. (See Bukhari # 4701) [3]

3.5. Collection by Caliph Uthman bin Affan (RA) period

Query 11:

It seems unlikely that the 'leaves' of Hafsa were of primary importance. They cannot have contained more than what had been arranged in the 'book' by Muhammad at the time of his death; and they can hardly have been the sole or main basis of the Uthmanic text. [4]

Clarification 11:

The query is not true because the collection with Hafsa was the one collected by Abu-bakr, and the collection of Qur'an by Abu-bakr was done with precautions and utmost care, as mentioned earlier. Therefore, the Muslim ummah agreed to this collection of Abu-bakr. As far as the Uthmanic text is concerned, people who have strong background regarding the history of collection of Qur'an would know that the Uthmanic text was based on the collection of Abu-bakr. Thus, he (Uthman) had requested the 'suhuf' (i.e. 'leaves') from Hafsa since she had the official collection of Qur'an given to her by Umar, who himself had received the collection by Abu-bakr.

ISLAM, HUMAN RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY

Query 12:

- A. The collection made by Zayd ibn-Thabit during the period of Abu-Bakr does not appear to have been very effective. [1]**
- B. There occurred dispute in the army about the text to be used in worship which initiated Uthman precede with another collection of the Qur'an. [2]**
- C. During the expeditions against Armenia and Azerbaijan, we are told, disputes concerning the reading of the Qur'an arose amongst the troops, who were drawn partly from Syria and partly from Iraq. The disputes were serious enough to lead the general, Hudhayfa, to lay the matter before the caliph, Uthman, and to urge him to take steps to put an end to these differences. [2]**
- D. Uthman commissioned Zayd and three Meccans to make another collection of the Qur'an, using the leaves in the possession of Hafsa. [2]**
- E. With Zayd were associated three members of noble Meccan families, Abd-Allah bin-Zubayr, Said ibn-al-As and Abdul Rahman ibn-al-Harith. One of the principles they were to follow was that, in case of difficulty as to the reading, the dialect of Quraysh, the tribe to which the Prophet belonged, was to be given the preference. The whole Qur'an was carefully revised and compared with the suhuf, which had been in Hafsa's keeping and which were returned to her when the work was finished. [2]**
- F. This collection was duly completed and certified copies of it sent to the main centres of the Islamic Empire, with the instruction that all other texts were to be destroyed. (2)**